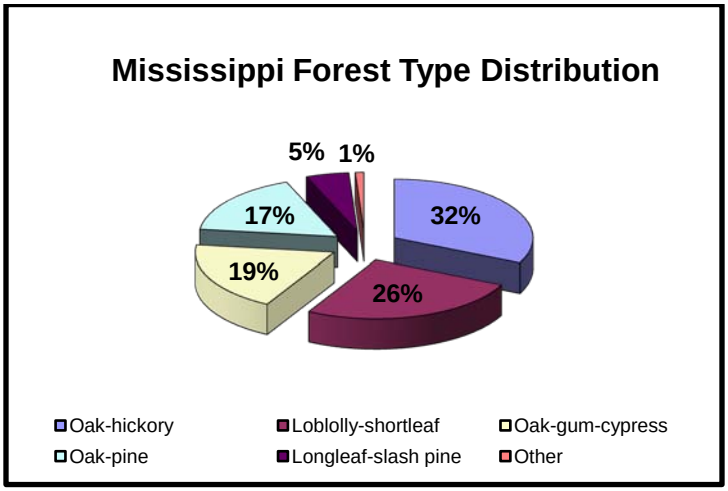
Mississippi

Forest Health Highlights 2010

The Resource

Mississippi's forests cover 19.9 million acres, more than 65% of the state's land area. Some 13.1 million acres of the states forested land is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 1.1 million acres are in national forests. Mississippi's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout the state. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress.

USDA Forest Service



Forest Influences and Programs

Redbay ambrosia beetle/laurel wilt disease was detected for the first time in Jackson County, MS in July 2009. The redbay ambrosia beetle carries with it a fungus that causes laurel wilt disease. Since its introduction on the east coast, it has caused considerable mortality to redbay and swamp bay and to a lesser degree other species of Lauraceae. Records of distribution have it occurring only along the east coast from South Carolina to Florida. The detection of this insect in Mississippi represents a considerable jump in

Joe MacGown and John Riggins – Mississippi State University

distribution or another introduction. Efforts are underway to determine the extent of the problem and possible solutions. During June of 2010, laurel wilt disease was discovered in a sassafras tree in another location in Jackson County. In addition, the redbay ambrosia beetle has been trapped in neighboring Harrison County and Mobile County, Alabama. But, to date, no detections of the wilt disease have been made in redbay or sassafras trees.

Don't Bring Firewood With You magnet as used by the Mississippi Forestry Commission

Southern pine beetle (SPB) has been Mississippi's most significant forest insect pest. Populations statewide have been very low for a number of years. In 2010, activity was again low, as was predicted from surveys of 10 counties during the spring by the Mississippi Forestry Commission. Ten spots have been detected on state and private lands, but none on national forest or other federal lands. The state has developed a comprehensive *SPB Prevention/Education Program* to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning in reducing SPB hazard and improving forest health overall. In addition to the educational aspects of this program there is an associated cost-share component to assist landowners in getting the thinning accomplished on a statewide basis beginning in 2009. Recently awarded ARRA funds toward this effort will also target assisting private forestry consultants and the logging operators required in addition to the private non-industrial landowners involved.

Terry Price, Georgia Forestry Commission, www.bugwood.org

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.) activity continues at a low level. Seven larger *Ips* spots were detected from aerial surveys with numerous smaller ones undocumented.

Sudden Oak Death surveys were conducted again in 2010 by pathologists from Mississippi State University and other federal agencies. The surveys focused on baiting water courses with susceptible leaves to detect the presence of the pathogen *(Phytophthora ramorum)* downstream from potential sources. If established in or outside of horticultural nurseries that have received potentially infected stock from shippers in California, the pathogen can show up in drainage water. A positive stream baiting obtained in late 2007 outside a nursery in the Jackson area caused concern initially. Sampling continued with positive water baits being obtained through 2010. At present, however, the pathogen is not considered to be established in the natural environment.

Cogongrass is a non-native, invasive plant that has been spreading aggressively in Mississippi in recent years. It takes over native grasses and vegetation and is a fire hazard under pine plantations. The severity and extent of infestations are increasing considerably in the disturbed forests following hurricane Katrina in 2005. The state has a Cogon Grass Task Force that is coordinating efforts to assist landowners and agencies with control/management of this species. Multiple agencies and groups signed an MOU concerning a newly enacted statewide Cooperative Weed Management Area. The Mississippi Forestry Commission has developed a Statewide Campaign on Cogongrass Awareness, Identification and Suppression. An invasive species spraying program has been funded with ARRA funds. During 2010 359 acres of cogongrass was treated in 26 counties statewide. Seventy-two acres of kudzu was also treated.

J.R. Meeker, Florida Division of Forestry, www. bugwood.org

Forest Health Assistance in Mississippi

Mississippi Forestry Commission **301 N. Lamar Street** **Suite 300** **Jackson, MS 39201** **601-359-1386** **Randy Chapin, Forest Health Coordinator** **rchapin@mfc.state.ms.us** **http://www.mfc.state.ms.us/**	**USDA Forest Service** **Southern Region, State & Private Forestry** **Forest Health Protection** **2500 Shreveport Hwy.** **Pineville, LA 71360** **318-473-7286** http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/foresthealth/